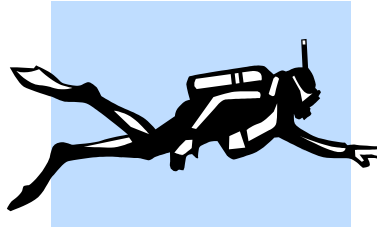


Gulf of Mexico Amendment 34

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2012



Final Rule – Income Requirement & Crew Size

What will the Final Rule do?

- Eliminate the income requirement for renewing Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish permits.
- Increase the maximum crew size from 3 to 4 people for dual-permitted (commercial & for-hire) vessels in the Gulf of Mexico

Why are these new regulations necessary?

- The current income requirement is no longer necessary to control acquiring a commercial reef fish permit. Several other regulations, such as the individual fishing quota program, ensure that the commercial permits are being used for commercial fishing. In the past few years, it has been difficult for some commercial fishermen to meet the income requirement as the economy required they find additional means of income.
- The current regulations limit the crew size on dual-permitted vessels to 3 people while fishing commercially. When these vessels are conducting commercial spear fishing trips, this regulation prevents them from have 2 divers in the water and 2 crew onboard, which is considered a safe diving practice by the U.S. Coast Guard Diving Policies and Procedures Manual. Increasing the maximum crew size to 4 people allows these vessels to improve their safety at sea.

What is the status of current action?

- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council submitted the plan amendment to NOAA Fisheries on May 3, 2012, for review by the Secretary of Commerce.
- The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on July 18, 2012, and was subject to a 30-day public comment period until September 10, 2012.
- The final rule published in the *Federal Register* on October 19, 2012, and will be effective on November 19, 2012.